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ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY DEALS WITH SELECTED ETHNOGRAPHIC AND OTHER METHCDS USED IN RESEARCH ON AFRO-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES. AFTER A REVIEW OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF PSYCHOLCGISTS CN AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE, IT IS CONTENDED THAT THE BEST METHOD OF ENQUIRY IS THAT OF ETHNOGRAPHY, AND THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE ETHNOGRAPHIC METHCD HAS BEEN HITHERTO USED, THE STUDIES COMPLETED HAVE BEEN PARTIAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES BECAUSE THE RESEARCHERS HAVE NEITHER LIVED IN THE COMMUNITY STUDIED NOR STUDIED A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE AREA. THE PROJECT DESCRIBED IN THIS PAPER IS THAT OF STUDYING A BLACK GHETTO AS AN ENTIRE CCMMUNITY, WITH OBSERVATION FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES. THE RESEARCHERS PARTICIPATED FULLY IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY, IN EXCLUSIVE BLACK ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, AND EXPERIENCED WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS THE IMPACT OF MAJOR AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS: THE SCHOOL, HEALTH SERVICES, AND POLICE; THE OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THESE ARE DESCRIBED IN DETAIL. TENTATIVE CONCLUSICNS REACHED INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: THE REJECTION OF TRAITS AND COMPLEXES SUCH AS THE SO-CALLED "CULTURE OF POVERTY" AND "LOWER-CLASS CULTURE," A VIEW OF AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE AS COMPLEX AND INTERNALLY HETEROGENEOUS AND OF AFRO-AMERICANS AS BICULTURAL, AND THE PERVASIVE NATURE OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM. (KG)

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ETHNOGRAPHY AND LARGE-SCALE COMPLEX SOCIOCULTURAL FIELDS

Participant Observation from Multiple Perspectives in a Low-Income Urban Afro-American Community

Charles A. Valentine

and

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1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1.1. Interests, Values, and Methodology

This paper deals mainly with selected ethnographic and other methods used in research on Afro-American communities in the United States. Before proceeding to specifics, however, methodology will be placed in a wider context to avoid any implication that discussion of method is an end in itself.

We do not believe that the methods of science are either "value-free" or neutral with respect to social issues and group interests. Anthropology, like any science, exists in a context of social systems and cultural values. Whatever anthropologists do, including research, has consequences for human populations. These consequences are mediated by the social systems of which the science is a part. Even if research could be designed so as to have no social consequences, this in itself would be a contribution to perpetuating the status quo, which of course is a very real result in terms of group interest and values. Therefore, the human effects of anthropological work are subject to appraisal in terms of ethical and other values beyond the need for knowledge itself. The conventional stance of value-free objectivity and neutrality on conflicting interests is either a pose or a delusion. The conduct and operations of anthropology are greatly influenced by systems of cultural values. These operations have value-laden consequences not only for anthropologists,

anthropological institutions and the social order of which they are a party, but also for the communities and populations that are subject to anthropological investigations (cf. Aberle 1967, Berreman 1969).

Several complexes of interests and values can be identifie as having important past, present, or future relevance to social science research dealing with Afro-Americans in the United States. First is the interest of non-Black Americans in maximizing the value of national moral integrity. These considerations appear to have guided the early modern phase of work in this field, beginning with the landmark writings of Gunnar Myrdal and his collaborators (Myrdal 1944, 1961). As indicated in the title of the major work produced by this research, An American Dilemma, this study was not focused primarily upon Afro-Americans at all but rather on the moral and other value conflicts manifested by Whites in their behavior toward Negroes. The effect on methodology was that the principal questions asked and the main kinds of data collected were not very revealing with respect to conditions of life or the patterns of behavior which characterize Afro-Americans. The major conclusion reached was the reassuring one that Black fortunes would improve more rapidly than was generally expected, thus relieving if not totally resolving the ethical dilemmas of mainstream White America. The tradition of mainstream self-satisfaction flowing from this has persisted, even within social science and in the face of massive contrary evidence, well into the present decade (e. g. Rose 1962). A secondary conclusion flowing from

the same preoccupations of Myrdal et al. and continuing to flourish a quarter century later (e. g. Glazer and Moynihan 1962) is that Afro-Americans have no way of life but a pathological version of mainstream White culture.

In recent years, a second set of concerns and values has become the dominant consideration in the background of Afro-American studies. It may be inferred from much current work that the mainstream need for social stability and public tranquility is now the commonest complex of values and interests in this area. Indeed this constellation appears to guide research on various different social strata and human groupings regarded as problem populations by dominant sectors of the society. These interests and values lead to inquires and methods designed to answer a new set of queries. Gone is the concern with moral dilemmas, and the ruling question now is what causes conflict and unrest? The action to be taken on the basis of social science findings is no longer just waiting for the inherently progressive social order to perfect itself. The search is on for effective means to reduce conflict and establish order. The theme of Black pathology is picked up from the earlier tradition because it fits well with the focus on disorder. All this is most evident in the more obviously political work of establishment writers and investigators (Moynihan 1965, 1967, 1969: National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder 1968).

The same themes may also be discerned just under the surface in most of the rest of the contemporary literature on Afro-Americans.

Like earlier approaches, this whole school of thought has also been singularly unproductive. It has given us neither compelling insights into the nature of Afro-American life nor clear bases for constructive or humane public policies.

It is therefore high time that alternative interests and values were proposed as guidelines for Afro-American research. The following proposal is hardly original, for all its elements have been current for some time in the arena of debate over Black-White relations and similar issues. The interest which we believe should be primary is the need of Afro-Americans for an end to the disadvantages which they suffer. Among the major positive values associated with these interests are intergroup social equality, group self-determination, and individual and collective human dignity. The legitimacy of the stated interest can hardly be questioned. Presumably there is no argument against the fact that the specified values are much less actualized or fulfilled for Black people in the United States than for Whites. We may also assume widespread agreement that this inequality -- together with comparable disadvantages suffered by other low-status strata and groups both in the U. S. and elsewhere -- is an important source of contemporary national and international crises. When the issues are stated as we have just proposed, however, these crises are no longer viewed primarily as a threat to dominant interests but rather as an expression of unfulfilled needs by those who are not dominant, in this case Afro-Americans.

This means we should design research to ask different questions. The answers should contribute to capabilities for fulfillment of the relevant values, in order to enhance the legitimate but presently denied interests of the ethnic group. The ruling question becomes what perpetuates the social inferiority of Afro-Americans? We then have two subsidiary questions. The first is what sources if any of inequality are internal to the ethnic collectivity. The second is what causes impinge upon the group from outside its boundaries. Valid answers might incidentally, provide important clues as to how the society as a whole could square collective behavior with proclaimed values, or whether social order and stability can be maintained. Primarily, however, solid findings from research so conceived should form a basis for potential action by whatever groups or forces are willing and able to act for Black equality, self-determination, and dignity.

Short of self-deception or pretense, researchers working among Afro-Americans cannot escape the fact that their work is relevant in varying degrees to all the complexes of interests and values discussed here. Undoubtedly, there are also other relevant orientations; this is not intended as an exhaustively comprehensive discussion. Our point is simply that alternatives which exist in the realm of interests and values are highly relevant to methodology. Moreover, choices must be made among the alternatives because different orientations promise contrasting human consequences. There is no ethically responsible course but to face the problem squarely. We shall argue later that major

questions about Afro-American inequality remain unanswered or poorly answered because the specific research techniques employed thus far are inappropriate or inadequate. We have tried to demonstrate here, however, that such technical problems are related to more basic difficulties.

As for making the actual choice among interest-value constellations, as such, we believe a determining consideration should be what may be called the ethnographic contract. While the consent of "subject" populations for research into their affairs may be a latent or manifest problem for many specialists, the ethnographer is probably uniquely dependent on the active and informed cooperation of the people with whom he works. In our view, this imposes a high degree of obligation and responsibility on the ethnographer. Perhaps the best way the ethnographer's side of this implicit reciprocity can be made good is to orient the research explicitly in terms of the known interests of the people under study. This then implies a philosophical or ethical orientation centered on positive values which are consistent with the chosen interests without being inhumane or destructive of human welfare. For Afro-Americanists these considerations would appear to lead rather directly to the consellation of interest and value concerns proposed earlier.

Perhaps a few related points should be discussed briefly. We believe that the guiding interests should be defined basically as they are expressed by the people under study. This will not always be easy. How a group or community conceives of its interests is often not fully

known until the ethnographer has learned a good deal about the people in question through his own research. Under such circumstances, the researcher must approximate the relevant interests as best he can at the outset and be fully prepared to change his understanding as his work progresses. Indeed this should be recognized as an important part of the general transformation through which a good ethnographer goes while carrying out field research. Another difficulty is that the people of a community may be divided, ambivalent, confused, or changing their beliefs about just what their interests are. In this case, the ethnographer must make his own choices or judgements, essentially as he would judge interest and value issues in relation to any community in which he lives but on which he is not doing research. As will become more clear later in this essay, we are convinced that intensive participation in the affairs of the community under study is essential to ethnography. Genuinely active participation in any community, in itself, imposes an obligation to make value judgements about relevant group interests.

This brings up another principle which, in the course of our present work, we have come to see as important for ethnographic research. We believe that ethnography is an appropriate method only for studying groups toward whom the investigator has some degree of positive inclination including some appreciation of their interests and some empathy with their values. It seems to us either psychologically impossible or an ill-conceived exercise in deceit to carry out a participatory ethnography among people toward whom one feels actively hostile. Since we do not

accept the pose of the ethnographer who claims to have no emotional involvement, positive or negative, we feel that the researcher must make a balanced choice one way or another. We do not mean to ignore or deny ambiguous feelings but only to suggest that such ambivalence probably can and should be more or less resolved. It does seem to have been true historically that most anthropologists have generally liked the various peoples they worked with. In cases where it has become clear that this was not so (e.g. Malinowski), it may well be that a reexamination of the research is in order, particularly with respect to any actual or potential use of a participatory approach in the work.

If it is agreed that a degree of positive attitude toward the people studied is important, several implications follow. Ethnographers with different value outlooks or priorities should be explicit about this element in their choice of problems and areas of work. We suspect that in the past there has been a strong tendency to make research choices partly on this basis, but that this criterion has often been implicit, unrecognized, or concealed. In earlier times, most of the knowledge necessary to make such a judgement might be unavailable with respect to unstudied populations. Today, particularly in urban studies, however, there are few if any totally unknown peoples. For work in complex societies, at any rate then, the necessary value choices seem to be possible at the appropriate time, namely before beginning participatory ethnography.

1.2 Theory and Methodology

There is no lack of proposed explanations for the continued disadvantaged position of Afro-Americans. The critical problem is rather to determine solid, verified choices among available interpretations. The most compelling reason why such determinations are needed is so that realistic policies and programs may be constructed and implemented by Black communities and whatever allies they can find. The most popular analyses emphasize one or more aspects of a so-called "tangle of pathology" said to exist within Black ghettos. We would like to suggest that a tangle of interpretations has been concocted and imposed upon the ghettos. Some results of this imposition may well be pathological both for Afro-Americans and for the rest of the society. Be that as it may, progress, either in understanding or in action, requires that the present muddle of explanations be untangled.

Most prominent explanations of Afro-American inequality invoke one or more of four interrelated kinds of explanations (summarily represented in Figure 1). These are (1) biological factors, (2) cultural factors, (3) causes internal to the ethnic group itself, and (4) external causes. Explanations stressing supposed biological factors internal to the group include theories of evolutionary racial differences (Coon 1962, Putnam 1961) and conceptions of genetically determined group psychological differences (Shuey 1958, Jensen 1969). Interpretations emphasizing internal cultural causes come in two main varieties. The first invokes alleged psychocultural weaknesses said to stem from the group's own way of life whether

Figure 1. Theories of the Causes of Afro-American Social Inequality

Source of Causation	Field of Causation: Biological	Field of Causation: Cultural
Internal to the Group	Evolutionary inferiority (Coon, Putnam Genetic deficiency (Shuey, Jensen)	Psycho-cultural deficiency (Lewis, Moynihan, Deutsch) Cultural difference and and conflict (Keil, Baratz, Stewart)
External, Environmental	Pathogenic physical environment (Abelson, Eichenwald & Fry)	Ethnic discrimination, institutional racism (Clark, Liebow, Willhelm)

labeled "the subculture of poverty," (Lewis 1966),"lower-class Negro culture." (Moynihan 1965) or "cultural deprivation" (Deutsch et al. 1968). The second stresses cultural distinctiveness, stemming from African roots, and attributes the difficulties of Afro-Americans to conflict between culture patterns of African and European derivation (Baratz and Baratz 1968, 1969, n. d.; Stewart 1967 a, 1967b, 1968. Attention is called to external biological causation by recent interest in environmental assaults on the human organism under conditions of poverty, ranging from hunger and malnutrition (Abelson 1969, Eichenwald and Fry 1969) to high prevalence of poisons and parasites (Oberle 1969). External cultural factors are embodied in the facts of differential treatment by the larger society, that is ethnic stratification and institutional racism in all its many forms.

There is no logical necessity for these contrasting interpretations to be regarded as mutually exclusive. It is logically possible for all the suggested factors to be integrated into a single multi-causal analysis. This is one reason why public controversy in this area has been so muddled. The tangle is further confused by the ease with which many writers treat one logically distinct explanation as a mere extension or subsidiary of another. Proponents of inherent group inferiority are prone to argue that biological weaknesses cause distinctive behavior which appears as a cultural contrast, that this makes the group especially vulnerable to destructive environmental forces, and even that differential social treatment through segregation is therefore justified (e.g. Putnam).

Historically remote external cultural factors, such as slavery, are often invoked as the ultimate sources of what are seen today as inherent biological deficits (Jensen) or internal psycho-cultural weaknesses (Moynihan).

Such multi-factor formulations might be useful if they clearly specified the relative importance of different factors and the nature of relationships among factors. Instead they generally present a muddled and fuzzy picture which breaks down badly under critical analysis. If, for example, one attempts to translate the theoretical contributions of Oscar Lewis or Daniel Moynihan into testable hypotheses, the result is quite disappointing. One finds a series of descriptive statements about traits allegedly characterizing the poor or Negroes, with little or no substantial supporting evidence. Beyond this one finds statements about causes so vague and equivocal that even the most meticulous search for a clear meaning can be denounced by the authors as misrepresentation (cf. Valentine 1968a, Valentine et al. 1969).

When theorists argue the primacy or preponderance of one type of cause, the result is seldom if ever a straightforwardly factual or logically convincing demonstration. Generally the concerned but critical reader must pit his own intuitions, speculations, and biases against those of the supposed authorities. This process can sometimes produce or reconfirm strong convictions. Clearly, however, it does not produce either consensus or effective public policies.

How can we cut through this tangle of theories to reach clear choices for understanding and action? At least a beginning can be made by attempting certain critical tasks to which little effective attention has yet been given. We need to decide which of the common interpretations can be decisively tested against factual evidence. Explanations which cannot be clearly tested against relevant data must be evaluated more broadly or loosely against existing theory in appropriate fields of knowledge. Where empirical tests are possible, it is more than high time that the relevant research be undertaken.

Any hypothesis which asserts the primacy of group-associated hereditary determinants (internal biological causes in Figure 1) is simply untestable. A scientific test of such propositions requires that comparisons be made between two or more different ethnic groups which have not been differently affected by any significant environmental factors, whether social, cultural, economic, political, or what have you. This is simply an impossibility in any society as highly stratified along ethnic lines and as discriminatory as the United States. So a strict test of such hypotheses will not be possible unless one day this society becomes egalitarian with respect to ethnic groupings. On the other hand, theories of innate racial differences in intelligence or behavior <u>can</u> readily be evaluated against the findings of human biology. From this viewpoint, these theories are naive at best. They are wholly inconsistent with contemporary knowledge as to the workings of natural

selection in man as a cultural species, the nature of ethnic groups as breeding populations, and the known distribution of variable biological traits in mankind as a whole (Brace, Hiernaux, and Livingston in Montagu 1964). Against these considerations, the evidence provided by paleontological and archeological investigations (Coon), psychological twin studies, and comparisons of IQ scores (Jensen) carry no weight because they are all open to various inconsistent interpretations. In short, any argument that Afro-Americans behave differently from other ethnic groups for internal biological reasons should be dismissed as both highly unlikely and quite untestable.

The state of knowledge with respect to external biological forces (lower left in Figure 1) is quite different. It has long been thoroughly documented that Black people in America suffer disproportionately from environmental threats to health and life (Pettigrew 1954, Huyck et al. 1965, Drake 1966). The biological mechanisms of many of these threats are rather clearly understood in medical and public health terms. To the extent that this is true, what is needed is obviously not research but action. There is simply no excuse for the society not to abolish these sources of differential suffering forthwith.

On the other hand, environmental threats to bodily welfare are unlike the other factors discussed here in one important respect. There is no need to search the remote historical or prehistoric past for non-biological forces which contribute to the impact of these health dangers on Afro-American populations. To cite but one very obvious example,

there can be no doubt that low income contributes, both directly and indirectly, to poor nutrition. More generally, external biological factors are seldom if ever primary causes of Afro-American disadvantage. The main reason these are not ultimate causes is that they are technically controllable, at least to a substantial degree. This means that when disease agents, poisons, and so on have seriously differential impact on particular ethnic groups, an unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources and technical effort is responsible. While the mechanisms of these problems are biological, the solutions obviously lie in the realm of social and institutional change to redistribute the necessary resources. Anthropological research can help make these solutions more specific by further detailing the biosocial mechanisms at work, but the basic thrust of necessary change is quite clear.

The major area in which basic questions are both unanswered and researchable is that of the social and cultural sources of inequality. If there are distinctive patterns of culture or social structure peculiar to particular social strata or ethnic groupings (Figure 1, upper right), these can be identified just as sociocultural distinctiveness can be established for any other human collectivity. If the institutions and processes of the national social order impose special conditions of life on minorities or the poor (lower right in the figure), this too can be demonstrated and documented. Moreover, there is no reason why careful study cannot establish the relative importance of these external and internal factors as causes of the sociopolitical position occupied by a particular human category, such as low-income Afro-Americans.

1.3 Non-Ethnographic Methods

An important reason why these basic research tasks have not been accomplished to date, is that the methods so far applied to these problems by social scientists are either inadequate or inappropriate. Survey techniques designed to produce quantitative data for statistical analysis may tell us a great deal about demographic and socioeconomic conditions. Yet these approaches by themselves reveal nothing about culture itself or about social causes (cf. Valentine 1968a). Indeed survey data and statistical formulations necessarily leave open to competing interpretations all questions about causes internal or external to the group under study. For example recent studies of census data have demonstrated clearly that residential segregation of Whites and non-Whites has increased over the last few decades (Taeuber and Taeuber 1965), but this work tells us nothing about the social or cultural causes of the demonstrated change. Hence the inconclusiveness of theoretical and polemical arguments which rely upon such sources to explain phenomena like the disadvantages suffered by the Black poor in the United States. This is why a document like the famous Moynihan Report can be used to support opposing positions and can arouse passionate debate without settling any important issues (Moynihan 1965, Rainwater and Yancey 1967, Valentine 1968a, Valentine et al. 1969).

All studies which rely exclusively or primarily upon interviews as their source of data are equally inadequate for another set of reasons.

This applies to the whole range of approaches in which interview data are not systematically checked against independent sources of evidence. We mean to include here not only sociological questionnaires but genealogical methods sometimes used in isolation by social anthropologists, clinical and other uses of in-depth and open-ended interviewing, collection of autobiographies, and such technical refinements of the interview approach as projective tests. No matter how useful these techniques may be for other purposes, taken alone they cannot produce answers to the questions we are asking. From our viewpoint, the basic weakness of all interview data is that it consists only of verbal testimony or self-projection by respondents or subjects. Without independent evidence it is impossible to know how such data may be related to the actual behavior of respondents or to the social processes and culture patterns which condition group behavior. So for example, Oscar Lewis' biographical studies tell us much about how selected Mexican and Puerto Rican families perceive and describe themselves but we learn little of their behavior outside the interview situation. This is a major reason why such works are so unsatisfactory as delineations of cultures or subcultures (Lewis 1966, 1968; cf. Valentine 1968a, 1968b).

Many pertinent works of research and analysis bring together combinations of quantitative, statistical evidence with interview materials used for qualitative interpretations. Examples range from the early work of Myrdal and his associates (Myrdal 1944), through Kenneth Clark's

Harlem studies (Clark 1965), to Lewis' recent supplementing of biographical family studies with statistical data from San Juan and New York City (Lewis 1968, cf. Valentine 1968b). Recalling today the main conclusions arrived at in the first two of these works illustrates well the failure of such methodological combinations to resolve the problems at hand. Myrdal concluded that Negroes have no way of life but a pathological version of White American culture, a judgement re-echoed many times since (e. g. Glazer and Moynihan 1963). To this Myrdal added the prediction, naive at best, that progress toward equality would be rapid, followed up 25 years later by his chief collaborator's fatuous statement that "the races were moving rapidly toward equality and desegregation by 1962 . . . the all-encompassing caste system had been broken everywhere . . . /and/ racism as a comprehensive ideology was maintained by only a few" (Rose 1962:xlii-xliv). Clark exposed some of the fallacies on which this sort of thinking is based, and he was one of the first to show that in practice the notion of "cultural deprivation" is used to justify perpetuating the discriminatory neglect of Afro-American interests. Yet the main methods and dominant sources of Clark's work led him no further on the level of theory than the sterile platitude that the Black ghetto is characterized by a so-called "tangle of pathology." These combinations of method have failed to produce convincing answers to basic questions because each added approach only contributes its own weaknesses, rather than compensating for the shortcomings of the other techniques applied in the combination.

1.4 Incomplete or Partial Ethnography

The most obviously appropriate methodology has been used only in a few studies and probably never employed to its full potential in research on Afro-Americans in the United States. This is ethnography as practiced by cultural anthropologists. While the ethnographic approach has not been very well defined in the anthropological literature, it does include three widely recognized components. First, the ethnographer employs various forms of interview to elicit cultural data in verbal form from members of the group or community under study. Second, ethnographers collect evidence of cultural patterns by observing directly the on-going social behavior of people in functioning communities. Thirdly, ethnographic research involves extending the investigator's direct experience of the social order by participating in the daily affairs of the people who make up his unit of study. These three broad categories of technique may be combined in varied combinations. Emphasis on one or another type of approach varies with different research problems and differs according to the personal predilections or talents of individual researchers. The crucial quality of ethnographic method is that all three ways of gathering data are employed together so that each may serve as an independent check on the others. This is the major reason why ethnography is more appropriate to the research tasks under discussion here than either survey work or any form of interviewing alone.

Ethnography was originally developed for the description of exotic cultural systems and social structures. Ethnographers also demonstrated

that their combination of techniques could be used to study sociocultural change, including both alterations stemming from interactions among two or more social systems and innovations arising from internal sources within communities or other groupings. Thus ethnography addresses itself directly to the central problems we are raising here: (1) in what ways are group behavior patterns culturally distinctive, and (2) to what extent are distinctive conditions of group life attributable to sources within the group or influences from outside? Ethnographic methodology has its own limitations and weaknesses, which cannot be dealt with in this brief presentation. Nevertheless, ethnography is so extremely relevant to our questions that its full potential must be actualized in researching the problem of Afro-American deprivation.

There have been some notable and pertinent studies in the United States making more or less use of ethnographic techniques, including a few carried out within Black communities. In our view, however, no such work known to us has marshalled the full resources of ethnography to address the crucial questions that are agonizing our society. Even the most contemporary and most relevant of these studies are so far failing to produce clear and convincing answers. We believe the most immediate reason for this is that all these studies are, in one or more senses, only partial ethnographies. By "partial ethnography" in the present context we mean research which employs less than the full range of ethnographic methodology that is relevant to the problems confronting

us. Much work that can be so described is certainly excellent in other respects. Our strictures in this connection do not mean that we find no value in the work of other ethnographers. We point to remaining deficiencies only as a preface to constructive proposals and a description of some attempts we have recently made to carry out these proposals.

One way in which Afro-American ethnography may be incomplete with respect to the problem of Black disadvantage is directly related to the balance among the three basic modes of data gathering. This is the tendency of investigators to maintain their residence, focus much of their personal existence, and participate actively in significant institutional involvements all outside the locale and social setting of their field work. It is obvious that this situation is radically different from that of the anthropologist making an expedition to a remote and isolated part of the world where there may not be a single member of his own society. It is all too easy for the American doing research in the United States to become a kind of commuting ethnographer whose home and family life remain in a middle-class suburb and who continues to function as a part-time professor or student in an academic institution. In our view, this is a fundamental change which radically limits both the data-gathering ability of the researcher and the quality of his experience in ethnography.

Our own recent and present experience in studying low-income urban Afro-Americans has convinced us more than ever that well rounded ethnography requires that the researcher reside and base his personal lives

among the people under study. The quality of work that is possible is altogether different if one lives and carries out the main commitments of primary associations outside the community or other unit of study. This greatly restricts and dilutes ones experience of the people and their life. Opportunities for direct observation of behavior cannot be maximized unless one is continually present in the social field. Participation in community life is greatly limited not only by physical absence but also by competing involvements elsewhere which inevitably arise from residing outside the community. In short, we have become convinced that ones entire immediate personal existence should be transferred to and carried on for long periods within the human and social scene one is attempting to understand. Without this quality of experience it is just too much to ask of anyone to produce a comprehensive, insightful, and empathetic understanding of a previously unknown community. In other words, the non-resident ethnographer imposes upon himself, in only lesser degree, some of the same quality of limitations on sources of evidence as the survey interviewer whose only contact with the community is in filling out a given number of questionnaires.

So while we respect the genuine achievements of non-resident ethnographers such as Liebow (1967) and Hannerz (1969), we nevertheless feel that it is at least an open question how much they may have missed which may be of basic significance for the questions that animate our inquiry. It should be noted that these two highly competent scientists, using essentially similar methods, carried out their research projects within

three or four years of each other in the Black ghetto of the same American city. Yet they came to quite different conclusions on the crucial question of cultural distinctiveness. Liebow (1967:338) states explicitly that he was unable to find evidence of "an independent cultural tradition," while Hannerz (1969:177-200) presents a lengthy description and analysis of a special "ghetto culture." The disagreement between these two works is not as absolute or unqualified as it appears from quoting these phrases without reference to their whole context. Also in some respects it is more a disagreement in theoretical interpretation than a contradiction of empirical evidence or description. Nevertheless, when one reads and compares these two outstanding works, the basic questions of the existence and nature of any distinct Afro-American culture remain neither convincingly resolved nor satisfactorily transcended. Our present perspective persuades us that much more progress could have been made toward quieting these doubts if both these perceptive observers had really committed themselves to living with the people they sought to understand.

Another limitation of Afro-American ethnography in the United States is the tendency to focus on very small social units. To cite only the two studies already referred to, Liebow studied a single network of streetcorner associates and Hannerz confined his work to one residential block. While much rich and suggestive material is presented in these and other similar studies, they represent little more than fragments of the social wholes that are relevant to the questions we are asking.

Within a street group or a block of households there is only a narrow range of social situations, institutional frameworks, and other settings for behavior. The ethnographer who confines himself to such units has direct access to only a fraction of the actual world of the people he is studying. He may neither observe nor participate in many or most of the wider activities, beyond household and street life, which make up a very significant part of social existence. This applies to most of the major economic, political, religious, and service institutions which impinge upon people's lives. It also applies to kinship, associational, and other informal or small-scale interactions and relations beyond the immediate unit of study. For all these enormously important aspects of life, such researchers are largely confined to the evidence of volunteered or elicited verbal testimony. In this respect, the researcher is again working within the limitations of interviewing, unchecked by observation or participation.

This kind of partial ethnography may yield convincing portrayals of patterned regularities in street behavior and domestic affairs. Yet any attempt to demonstrate relationships between these patterns and wider social systems or cultural wholes is necessarily tenuous and at least somewhat speculative. The point is not just that the quality of evidence is poor for wider aspects of life. It is rather that without firm knowledge of the system beyond the domicile and the corner, it is not possible to arrive at convincing answers to crucial questions even

about domestic and street patterns. To what extent are these patterns the result of people learning to behave similarly through exposure to a set of values, norms, and role models which are peculiar to the ethnic group or social class to which they belong? On the other hand, to what extent does the patterned behavior spring from motives shaped by the same values and models as the rest of society but expressed differently because of the necessity to adapt to unique external conditions? In other words, are the described patterns better understood as part of a special group culture or as responses to a special social situation?

It is precisely here that street-corner research and domestic ethnography fail us. Instead of clear answers we have the contradictory interpretations illustrated by the work of Liebow and Hannerz. From the restricted range of hard data made available by this approach, it is possible to make a reasoned case for either side of the argument. Of course, as indicated earlier, the issue need not be regarded only as an either-or choice of mutually exclusive interpretations. There is presumably a vast range of combinations in which social conditions and cultural factors both internal and external to the group in question might operate simultaneously to produce observable behavior. However, ethnography restricted to domiciles and sidewalks does not enable us to arrive at resolutions such as these either. The necessary data simply are lacking.

2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Studying an Urban District as a Community

In our own work, after experimenting with lesser units, we have concluded that the minimal social field for our purposes is what local people themselves call their community. In this case, we are dealing with a named urban district. It has generally understood territorial boundaries and a certain historical continuity which is more or less widely known among present inhabitants. This district is poverty-stricken and deteriorated. As a community it is in a state of considerable flux and turmoil. In many respects it is internally divided and disunited. At the same time, there are operative structures of community-wide organization, principally focused around a community council which formally represents some 100 local groups, associations, and institutions. The population of roughly 100,000 is approximately two-thirds Afro-American. There are many varieties and levels of exclusively Black associations and organizations within which ethnically distinct culture patterns might be expected to flourish. The community also has a broad array of major mainstream American institutions in the area of economic life, politics, religion, educational, health, and social services.

We have not been able to see how a convincing test of prevalent ideas on internal and external sources of Afro-American disadvantage could be made in a community with less than these structural characteristics. In order to approach such a testing ground, however, we have obviously had to

tackle a research unit of enormous scale and complexity by traditional ethnographic standards. Our immediate aim has become the rather ambitious one of carrying out a well-rounded ethnography of this community as a whole. Over the past 17 months we have embarked on this project as a team of husband, wife, and 2½ year-old son, plus a secretary. As you might imagine, we expect to be keptbusy for some time to come.

Obviously such an undertaking involves a great variety of methodological problems. We make no pretense of dealing with this whole range here, partly because of space limitations but also because we are by no means sure we have yet solved all the problems of method which present themselves. We, therefore, select one area in which it appears we may be developing an approach with potentialities that may be of interest to other ethnographers of the Afro-American scene and other settings in complex societies. The basic operation is participation in diverse roles providing multiple observational perspectives corresponding to major strategic positions in the social field. We thus found a way to make a simultaneous study-from-within of distinct but interacting organizational and institutional units. The major advantage of this approach is that it transcends the more conventional procedure, in complex societies, of examining different institutional constellations separately.

2.2 Beginning in the Block and Neighborhood

We began our work as participant observers in a residential block and its surrounding neighborhood. We have continued to live in this location, and it remains our base of research operations. Here we have

concentrated on domestic life, socialization patterns, sex roles and sex relations, kinship and associational networks, peer groups, streetcorner activities, neighborhood economics, and the smaller localized institutions such as the churches and places of entertainment. It is here we feel that much of the evidence for any ethnically distinct or class-associated culture may be found.

Our participatory approach involves quite fully focusing our personal lives within the community. We began simply as newcomers to the block. Initially we sought contacts with neighbors for the simple information and minor aid a family needs in establishing itself in a new neighborhood. From the beginning we told everyone we met our reasons for being in the community in terms of our work. We immediately began actively sharing with our new neighbors the varied experiences of tenement life, street activities, neighborhood shopping, and so on. This quickly led into home visits back and forth, cooperative baby sitting, and then food exchanges. From an early point onward, we have had people of all ages visiting our apartment every day. We use our car to give many people rides and extend ourselves in this respect somewhat more than other auto owners in the neighborhood. Though we had little money in the early months, being without a grant, we have played what part we could in informal credit networks. When various extra-legal bonanzas of goods periodically appeared in the neighborhood, we found ourselves in the networks by which such windfalls are distributed.

Initially there was much curiosity about us, some suspicion, and very little hostility of which we were aware. With hardly any exceptions, all this melted away as people came to their own conclusion that we were in fact nothing other than what we said we were. Rapport-building advantages included our willingness to use our car and to lend small amounts of money, coupled with a refusal to be unduly exploited in these respects. Our relatively greater literacy has enabled us to be useful in ways ranging from interpreting legal papers to helping with school homework. People discovered that we were willing to take part, as ordinary contributing participants, in virtually any neighborhood or community activity, organization, or enterprise -- ranging from block associations to drinking and gambling parties to protest demonstrations.

Most important, we believe, everyone aware of us in the community knows that we actually live under the same conditions as other community members. Like everyone else, we are sometimes without heat, hot water, or functional plumbing. We are as exposed as anyone else to the multiple hazards embodied by the lack of police protection, the frequency of police exploitation, and the common occurrence of police harrassment. Our child could die because of the same combination of incompetence and irresponsibility in emergency wards which preceded the death of babies in two families we know. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. The point is that people accept us as genuine participants in community life because that is what we are. From this viewpoint, most of the current anxious debate in anthropological circles about access to Afro-American

and other more or less rebellious communities seems to us largely beside the point.

2.3 Extending to Wider Social Settings

It was not long before we found ourselves drawn beyond our neighborhood base into the wider activities and associations of our block mates and other neighbors. Prominent among the settings to which we were thus introduced were various larger institutions which operate within the community but are controlled from external power centers and are largely staffed by white people who live elsewhere. These include schools, hospitals, the police department, courts, jails, places of employment, major denominational churches, political centers, welfare agencies, and other social service establishments. These institutions channel the most direct influences of the wider society on the ghetto community. It is in these settings that community members daily confront the individual representatives, structural features, customary repertoires and routines of the dominant strata. It is here that we expect to find much direct evidence of interaction between mainstream American culture and whatever class-linked or ethnically determined way of life may exist in our chosen community.

The kinds of contexts so far mentioned by no means exhaust the types of settings relevant to the problems we are working on. For example, there is a wide variety of structures within which ethnic unity and distinctiveness are vigorously asserted, often in dynamic and innovative forms. These include militant and nationalistic political organizations,

religious bodies, and forums for artistic expression. We have recorded some results of our work in these contexts elsewhere (Valentine and Valentine 1969, Valentine 1970). For the sake of brevity and clear focus in the present discussion of methods, we will concentrate on the other types of settings mentioned earlier. This omission does not entail neglecting any fundamentally special methodological problems.

The specific process by which we have expanded our attention beyond the narrower community contexts to the larger institutional settings is important to our method. Our initial approach is to accompany community members through many complete episodes of contact with external institutions. Our role as observers is known to those whom we accompany. Especially in initial contacts, however, we allow institutional personnel to perceive us merely as associates of the community principals in the interaction. Concretely this means such procedures as the following. When people are ill or injured, we go with them to health institutions. Then we rely on our status as healthy associates, temporarily responsible for the patient, to stick stubbornly with the individual through as much of the ensuing process as institutional personnel will possibly allow. We have joined one public school parent association and participated informally in several others. With the help of cooperative community leaders, this has provided many opportunities to observe numerous aspects of the educational process, from classrooms to parent-teacher interactions. We follow individuals as closely as possible through the processes of arrest or complaint to the

police, confinement, obtaining counsel, being tried or giving testimony in proceedings against someone else, and the various institutional sequelae of these events. We have visited neighbors or other community people confined in every major penal institution near out area. Accompanying people through interactions with welfare investigators, case workers, surplus food distributors, and various other social service personnel gives us direct access to the impact of agencies in this field. We have taken part in the work day of many employed persons whose work situation either allows temporary volunteer service, such as many anti-poverty jobs, or makes it possible to tag along informally, as in community political field work. In differently structured occupations, where we have so far only visited some places of employment, such as factory and domestic work or truck driving, we are working out plans for a more participatory approach by taking temporary jobs.

What this part of the method does is enable us to experience the externally controlled institutions much as community people experience them. It is of course essential that the individuals who take us with them through these experiences are also well known to us in their own domestic and neighborhood settings. This makes their observed behavior, their volunteered or elicited explanations, and their expressions of feeling in the external settings much more meaningful to us. Thus, in effect, we have the full resources of sample data not only from informant testimony but also from direct observation and considerable participatory

experience covering a very large portion of the community's collective life. The varied sources and kinds of data function as mutual checks on one another, giving our findings what we feel is a high level of validity.

The method as described thus far is still quite incomplete. It did not take us long to be impressed by the fact that much in the structure and operations of external institutions is hidden from the worm's eye view of the community person -- be he patient, inmate, prisoner, employee, client, or whatnot. If ever there were a situation in which Goffman's dramaturgical analogies hold good, it is here. So many vital processes go on backstage, that the whole institutional apparatus is simply not intelligible through the community individual's experience alone. Of course, community people do have well developed conceptions of what goes on behind the scenes. However, these conceptions can be neither verified nor disconfirmed by the techniques so far indicated.

This led us directly to the next and by far the most difficult phase of our developing method. As participant observation in the company of friends and neighbors began to show diminishing returns in any one institution or class of institutions, we have attempted to gain institutional access at other levels. This has involved adopting one or both of two additional roles: scientific observer with official permission to carry out research on the institution from within, and consultant to the institution on matters of community relations. The effort to achieve these kinds of access has been enormously difficult, extremely time consuming, often frustrating, and by no means uniformly successful. Bureaucratic

obfuscation and diffusion of responsibility, professional suspicion and hostility, endless institutional defensiveness, and many other forms of resistance have been encountered. The early coolness and initial negativism of some community people, including even that of the most militant of Black Nationalists reacting to us as an interracial couple or as social scientists, was never remotely comparable to the problems created by external professionals and bureaucrats. Presumably, this contrast is due in part, at least, to the fact that we are not full participants in these institutions in the same sense that we are active members of the community. Indeed there is a substantial degree of mutual exclusiveness between these two arenas of participation.

Nevertheless, we have achieved some successes in this aspect of our approach, with results which we feel amply justify continuing the effort. In two general hospitals and one mental health clinic we have managed to gain considerable freedom of observation, access to medical records, admission to staff meetings, and opportunities to consult with professional and other personnel. In one school district, where the administration happens to be closer to the community than others, we are officially welcome to study all activities from classroom operations to private meetings and negotiations of the district board. Several major branches of the principal community anti-poverty agency have accepted us both as participant observers and as informal consultants at all levels of a variety of activities. The school district and the anti-poverty agency are partly

special cases. This is so because indigenous community leadership has enough influence so that external control of their operations is not so complete as in the case of the hospitals. Access to the hospitals has been far the most difficult to gain.

The means of gaining such access and opportunities are quite varied. They include making contact through community people who have ties with institutional administrations, demonstrating that we have something uniquely useful to offer as consultants, building personal rapport with selected professionals, invoking our own professional status and affiliations, and a great deal of simply pushing our way into institutional settings where we are not initially welcome. We have hopes and plans for extending similar approaches to a variety of additional institutions. Early targets on our list include a second school district and the welfare administration. Institutional complexes where we expect to have the most trouble and are not sure we will ever succeed include the penal system and the police department.

The focus of our work remains the Afro-American community. Therefore we use our opportunities for data gathering within the larger institutions primarily for elucidating the processes and experiences through which community members go in these settings. That is, we have resisted the temptation to refocus our attention on the institutions as such. We utilize our backstage access to personnel, procedures, and records primarily to throw further light on what happens to individual community clients of the institutions with whom we are acquainted and to categories of

clients we know are common or important in the community. Thus we learn much about institutional structure and operations, as well as the beliefs and attitudes of institutional personnel, but the frame of reference is always community relations.

One further feature of this community sometimes makes it necessary to add yet another aspect to our methodology. Many individuals and families have significant current or recent ties and associations entirely outside the community. Prominent among the various reasons for this is the fact that many residents have come to the community more or less recently from different areas where they still have kinsmen or other associations. Sometimes crucial aspects of individual or family behavior are not intelligible -- either in terms of community norms or with respect to maco-institutional experiences -- unless one has direct knowledge of these more or less distant associations. In some cases we are able to visit these extra-community settings for brief observations and interviewing. Occasionally community people accompany us on such little field trips and renew the relevant ties in our presence. Thus we can add one more perspective on the behavior and experience of people who belong to the community.

2.4 Integrating Diverse Data to Portray the Community

It is when these various sources of data are integrated in focusing on a case study or other unit of investigation that their combined potential becomes evident. Consider, for example, the case of a household we have

followed for nearly a year. Residents of our block for several years, this family includes a foster son who in the past year has been excluded from one elementary school, spent the daytime hours in the streets for three months, been hospitalized as a psychiatric patient for a further three months, and is now attending an elementary school in another school district. We have been able to observe this boy at home, in peer groups, in numerous other neighborhood settings, in two schools, a mental health clinic, and a psychiatric hospital. We have interacted constantly with his foster family, his playmates, and other neighborhood associates. We have been able to see him, not only through the eyes not of all these people, but also as he is seen and dealt with by several sets of educational, psychiatric, social work, and other specialists. In turn we know what all these institutional settings and categories of personnel look and feel like to the boy and to his foster parents. Because there was evidence that events in the boy's earlier life in another state might be significant in his case, we spent a week in four different southern communities where he had lived. There we observed every setting in which he had spent much time, interviewed every surviving member of his original family, visited an earlier foster family, consulted with more than a dozen professionals who had had some contact with the case, and inspected all relevant records made by medical, legal, and welfare agencies.

The major point is not that all this gives us unusually detailed individual case history. It is rather that each and every dimension of

this case study affords perspectives on behavioral patterns and social settings that are relevant to our basic questions about the cultural distinctiveness of the Black community, the impact of outside forces on this community, and the sources of Afro-American inequality. Our method enables us to make an intensive examination, from multiple perspectives, of many kinds of phenomena. We can focus this approach not only on individuals and families but also on numerous other topics. These include local events experienced by ourselves and diverse other observers from both within and outside the community. Also included are local organizations which have variable impacts on different categories of people and institutions and which we ourselves can observe from within. Other similar foci for study can perhaps be imagined.

What we are developing is, in effect, an expanding series of interlocking micro-studies of diverse phenomenal units. Such units include ongoing life histories, developing event sequences, and functioning organizations. Methodologically all these data-gathering operations are held together in at least two significant ways. They are integrated both by continual reference to our ruling questions and by constant attempts to view each unit of study from multiple participant-observational vantage points. In terms of social structure, we are continually moving out and back again along the varied lines of connection between intimate domestic and neighborhood associations, community organizations, external institutions operating within the community, and ties to other more or less remote communities. In terms of cultural

systems, we are continually confronting the contrasting patterns and the shared or common regularities presented by simultaneous exposure to Afro-American behavior in all-Black gettings, community people acting in external institutional contexts, and outsiders behaving within the ghetto. The interlocking links among all these diverse scenes and perspectives are so numerous that, after almost a year and a half of work, there is hardly anything we look at which does not immediately appear to have some probable structural or cultural links with other collective phenomena of which we have knowledge.

This sense of holistic interconnectedness within the accumulating evidence was of course emphatically absent during earlier stages of the work. Indeed there have been periods of discouragement when we really feared we had attacked a social universe far too large and complex to be elucidated by ethnographic approaches. Moreover, we remain acutely aware that much time and a great deal more effort will be required before the picture which seems to be emerging will be anywhere nearly completed and clear. Nevertheless, by persistently following the approach outlined here we have gained a measure of confidence that holistic ethnographies of communities within a complex society are feasible. More important, the same experience is strengthening our conviction that the instrument of ethnography can produce convincing answers to our basic questions about the position and role of Black people in American society.

2.5 Some Tentative General Findings

We therefore conclude with a brief and general statement of some broad findings which seem to be emerging from our work. Obviously it is much too soon for these findings to be presented as anything more than the most tentative conclusions subject to much further investigation and verification. Nevertheless, it should be said that, at this stage in our work, these conclusions are becoming more firm as the evidence accumulates, and thus far we have not found data to contradict them.

First, poverty is a dramatically apparent reality in this community, but what has been called the "culture of poverty" and "lower-class culture" does not exist here. We periodically run through the lists of traits and complexes offered by the various theorists of poverty culture, in order to test these formulations against our data. We invariably find that the items and patterns listed either do not occur among our people, appear with incidences not markedly different from those expected in middle-class communities, or exist for some obvious externally determined reason that has nothing to do with culture as a way of life shared through socialization. To cite but one example, Oscar Lewis says that the "culture of poverty" is characterized by feelings of "marginality, of helplessness, of dependency and of inferiority" (Lewis 1966:xlvii). Such feelings are indeed expressed more often by our present neighbors than by people surrounding us in middle-class suburbs where we have resided in the past. Living where we do now, however, speedily demonstrates that such feelings are entirely realistic, which is to say that

they are intelligent perceptions of the actual conditions of life. That these sentiments are not some deeply implanted cultural complex is demonstrated by the frequent expression by the same human beings of faith in the ideal of overcoming all these conditions. Moreover, we are now acquainted with a small sample of Afro-Americans who have recently escaped from this particular ghetto to middle-class status. These people not only have transcended their feelings of "helplessness, dependency," and so forth, but now serve as models, albeit somewhat ambiguous ones, for their relatives and associates left behind in the ghetto. In our increasingly strong view, the so-called "culture of poverty" is a creation of the over-ripe imaginations of comfortable intellectuals who have either never been poor or forgotten what it is really like.

Second, Afro-American culture is a complex, internally heterogeneous, growing and self-generating reality. The main impact and significance of this phenomenon will probably be a thing of the future, possibly the near future. There is no doubt whatever in our minds that Black people in the United States have been and are being socialized into distinctive patterns which manifest themselves most obviously in linguistic forms, styles of expressive and esthetic behavior, food preferences, and ceremonial behavior. Indeed we see in our community a considerable variety of such styles which may or may not be unified, either by common African backgrounds or by shared conditions of long-term Euro-American domination. To cite the linguistic realm alone, significant elements within our

population speak various Afro-English, Afro-Spanish, and Afro-French dialects, not to mention fully creolized languages such as Takitaki. What may or may not be the wave of the future is an emerging Afro-American culture, a kind of unifying revitalization movement expressed through media as varied as commercialized "Afro" hair and dress styles, newly emerging pro-Black or anti-White sentiments, and the programs of revolutionary political organizations. The presently unanswered question, whether the more creative and humane or the more tragic potentialities in all this will eventuate, is surely one of the more compelling reasons for involvement, scholarly or otherwise, in the Afro-American scene today.

Third, Afro-Americans are deeply and significantly bicultural. Though developed in the study of other non-European ethnic groups within the United States (Polgar 1960), the concept of bicultural socialization is highly relevant to the Black experience in America. Our work shows us a Black population that is clearly being brought up in two cultural traditions simultaneously. Socialization of mainstream Euro-American norms accompanies enculturation into Afro-American styles of belief and behavior. By this we do not mean that the two sets of patterns reach the individual only from different sources. On the contrary, Afro-American homes are self-conscious instruments of bicultural socialization. It is only the White-dominated institutions, such as schools, which attempt to oppose one cultural tradition to the other. The result is that Afro-Americans are far more knowledgeable about and competent in Euro-American

cultures than most Whites know. Moreover, since if Whites are biculturated the non-American side is European, Euro-Americans seldom if ever have a comparable knowledge of Black culture. Among the dominant elements who have either failed or refused to recognize Afro-American bicultural competence are the neo-Herskovitsians who argue that Black inequality and disadvantage in the United States results from cultural conflict and misunderstanding (e.g. Baratz, Stewart). In our work we find no evidence whatsoever to support this position. Whatever the intentions of those who purvey this position, it is no more in effect than an excuse and a rationalization for certain injustices in American society.

Fourth, institutional racism is the pervasive systemic reality which confronts Afro-Americans in the United States today. Whenever we examine directly what happens to Black people in mainstream institutions, this conclusion is brought home to us again and again. Academics and experts can make this into a complex abstract issue, but concrete everyday experience simplifies it again. We cannot forget sitting for several hours in the waiting room outside a hospital emergency ward with Black and Puerto Rican mothers who, like us, had brought their babies there because they had high fevers. We cannot forget watching a little Jewish lady with a small scratch on her ear lobe admitted immediately while the rest of us continued to wait. Most of all, we cannot forget that while our baby is still alive, one of the Black babies and one of the Spanish babies in that group died that weekend. This is only the most dire of

many, many comparable experiences with the same meaning. We have now watched for many months how public school teachers systematically retard the intellectual development of Afro-American children by substituting authoritarian discipline for opportunities to learn and penalizing anyone who violates established routine in the smallest way, no matter how intelligent or creative. We cannot help but conclude that the primary destructive force creating and perpetuating Afro-American inequality is Euro-American racism. Far from Black culture being a handicap in all this, as the neo-Herskovitsians argue, it is the one source of strength which we can see as potentially developing into a shield for the protection of this oppressed people against their enemies.

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